

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2581

Introduced by Assembly Member Bradford

February 19, 2010

An act to add Division 18 (commencing with Section 40000) to the Financial Code, relating to banking development districts.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2581, as introduced, Bradford. Banking development districts.

Existing law provides for various programs and activities in the development of economic opportunities for businesses in the state. The California Small Business Financial Development Corporation Law establishes small business financial development corporations and provides for their regulation by the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. Existing law, the Banking Law, provides for the regulation of banks by the Department of Financial Institutions.

This bill would create a Banking Development District Program, within the Treasurer's office, which would encourage the establishment of banking branches in specially designated geographic locations where there is a demonstrated need for banking services. The bill would require the Treasurer and the Department of Financial Institutions to adopt rules and regulations for the establishment and maintenance of banking development districts and to evaluate and approve applications for designation of banking development districts. The bill would require the Treasurer and the department to develop and provide certain incentives to banks located in a banking development district. The bill would also require the Treasurer and the department to collaborate to create a performance review process for the program, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) Too many Californians are disconnected from the financial
4 mainstream. National estimates show that 10 percent of households,
5 including nearly one-quarter of the minority population, are
6 “unbanked,” meaning they lack a basic checking or savings
7 account. In California, 12 percent of adults do not have a checking
8 or savings account, according to the United States Census. Recent
9 market research indicates that Fresno and Los Angeles have the
10 second and third highest percentages of unbanked residents in the
11 country. In San Francisco, the Brookings Institution found that
12 one in five adults, and half the city’s African-Americans and
13 Latinos, do not have bank accounts. The unbanked are most likely
14 to be people who are less educated and have lower incomes.

15 (b) The unbanked poor pay more to conduct their financial lives.
16 Utilizing check cashing outlets and money order services to pay
17 bills and expenses can have costly side effects as the result of fees
18 and service charges.

19 (c) Families without accounts often do not have a safe place to
20 keep their money. They may walk around with large amounts of
21 cash in their pockets, or keep it at home in a coffee can. Robberies
22 can be more prevalent around check cashing outlets. A burglary,
23 or a fire, could cost them their life’s savings in a matter of
24 moments.

25 (d) Lower income households often pay more for financial
26 services. According to a recent Brookings Institution study, a
27 full-time worker without a checking account could potentially save
28 as much as \$40,000 during his or her career by relying on a
29 lower-cost checking account instead of check cashing services.
30 As a result without a checking account or lower-cost checking
31 account, lower income families have added difficulty saving for
32 and investing in wealth-building assets, the investments they do
33 make are too often not in their best financial interest, and business
34 opportunities in lower income markets are unduly depressed.

1 (e) A bank account is also the first step to financial security and
2 asset building for many families. A bank account helps people
3 take the first step onto this path. Without an account, it is much
4 more difficult to get well-priced car loans, credit cards, or
5 mortgages, which are the exact financial tools needed to climb up
6 the economic ladder. Many families stay stuck on a different path
7 going to pawn shops, payday lenders, and rent-to-own stores where
8 the interest rates can reach several hundred percent.

9 (f) While financial institutions may see the long-term business
10 potential of underserved areas, they may have a short-term concern
11 that it would take a number of years before they can attract enough
12 retail deposits to become viable. Those concerns are magnified by
13 the fact that lower income workers often need to use banking
14 services in off-business hours because they work in multiple jobs,
15 making it more difficult for banks to attract customers with
16 standard business practices.

17 (g) In 1999, the State of New York established a Banking
18 Development District Program and made available a range of state
19 and city incentives to participating financial institutions. The
20 incentives provided through the program aim to help banks get
21 over short-term obstacles to profitability, enabling them to branch
22 into neighborhoods with long-term business potential, and better
23 serve low-income consumers with existing bank branches.

24 (h) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this act to create
25 a Banking Development District Program to spur increased and
26 enhanced banking services in underserved communities that will
27 spur greater financial inclusion and promote local economic
28 development. The desired outcome is that more Californians will
29 enter the financial mainstream and build savings and wealth
30 through participating banks' offerings and marketing of reasonably
31 priced transactional, loan, and credit products.

32 SEC. 2. Division 18 (commencing with Section 40000) is added
33 to the Financial Code, to read:

34
35 DIVISION 18. BANKING DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
36 PROGRAM
37

38 40000. The Banking Development District Program is hereby
39 created in order to encourage the establishment of banking branches
40 that provide needed products and services in specifically designated

1 geographic locations where there is a demonstrated need for
2 banking services. These designated locations shall be known as
3 banking development districts. Financial institutions may seek to
4 participate in the program to do either of the following:

5 (a) Open a new outlet in a lower income, underserved area.

6 (b) Develop and market a new product line or group of services
7 in an existing outlet in an underserved community.

8 40001. For purposes of this division, the following definitions
9 shall apply:

10 (a) "Bank" refers to any commercial bank, savings bank, or
11 savings association.

12 (b) "Unbanked" refers to a person who lacks both a basic
13 checking account and a savings account.

14 (c) "Underbanked" refers to a person who has a bank account
15 but is not fully integrated in the financial mainstream.

16 (d) "Underserved community" is a remote location or
17 impoverished area that lacks banking services commensurate with
18 the services provided to higher income areas with a population of
19 similar size.

20 (e) "Banking development district" is a specifically designated
21 geographic location where there is a demonstrated need for banking
22 services that has been designated as such by the Treasurer and the
23 Department of Financial Institutions pursuant to this division.

24 (f) "Local agency" means a city, county, whether general law
25 or chartered, city and county, or town.

26 40002. (a) The Banking Development District Program shall
27 be established within the Treasurer's office.

28 (b) In order to participate in the Banking Development District
29 Program, a local agency, in conjunction with a bank, shall submit
30 an application to the Treasurer and the Department of Financial
31 Institutions for the designation of an underserved community as
32 a banking development district.

33 (c) The Treasurer, the Department of Financial Institutions, and
34 local agencies may compile a list of underserved communities or
35 regions that lack a concentration of banks and services in order to
36 provide banks with a clear demonstration of those areas that are
37 in the most need.

38 (d) The application shall include, but not be limited to, all of
39 the following components:

1 (1) Clearly define the current and anticipated bank product and
2 service needs of the community.

3 (2) Demonstrate that these needs are not currently being met
4 by existing institutions, including, in particular, their branches in
5 the community.

6 (3) Demonstrate that by coming into the community, or
7 introducing and effectively marketing additional product lines or
8 services suited for lower income consumers in an existing branch,
9 the bank in question is prepared to specifically meet the community
10 needs.

11 40003. The Treasurer and the Department of Financial
12 Institutions shall set forth the selection criteria to evaluate a bank's
13 application. The selection criteria shall aim to satisfy the following:

14 (a) Result in needed and responsible bank products and
15 marketing of those products to local consumers.

16 (b) Be flexible and allow for differences in local markets.

17 (c) Encourage viable business practices.

18 40004. The Treasurer and the Department of Financial
19 Institutions shall evaluate and approve applications and designate
20 banking development districts with an emphasis on evaluating the
21 extent to which the bank is prepared to offer and to market products
22 suited for lower income consumers, including those products that
23 accomplish the following:

24 (a) Help unbanked Californians open starter accounts. These
25 accounts shall have features to help people overcome barriers that
26 prevent them from opening accounts that may include the
27 following:

28 (1) "Second Chance" type features for clients who are listed on
29 Chex Systems or similar databases.

30 (2) No monthly balance requirements.

31 (3) Limited low-cost overdraft protection plans.

32 (b) Build financial literacy of community members.

33 (c) Provide effective ways to help low-income consumers build
34 savings.

35 (d) Provide effective ways to help low-income consumers build
36 a credit record.

37 (e) Provide competitively priced mortgages and auto loans.

38 (f) Offer microloans and microlending products and services.

39 (g) Provide a range of well-priced loans and other products for
40 small businesses.

1 (h) Provide specialized marketing to inform community
2 members about the products.

3 (i) Provide specialized training of staff, including both frontline
4 and customer service staff, to meet the needs of community
5 members.

6 40005. The Treasurer and the Department of Financial
7 Institutions shall develop and provide a range of incentives to help
8 banks overcome short-term costs that prevent them from offering
9 products and services that have long-term business potential. The
10 incentives shall be all of the following:

11 (a) Valuable to banks.

12 (b) Significant enough to encourage banks to locate in an
13 underserved community or develop new products and services
14 within existing branches but small enough that a branch's financial
15 success requires services to the community.

16 (c) Require reauthorization every two years.

17 40006. Upon designation of a banking development district by
18 the Treasurer and the Department of Financial Institutions, the
19 bank located within the banking development district shall be
20 eligible for a range of incentives. The range of incentives may
21 include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

22 (a) Access to priority of deposits of public funds and access to
23 below market-rate public funds as deemed appropriate and
24 approved by the Treasurer.

25 (b) Incentives offered by local agencies as deemed appropriate
26 by the local agency and the Treasurer.

27 40007. The Treasurer may work with local agencies and
28 economic development officials to develop additional local
29 incentives for participating banks. These local incentives may
30 include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

31 (a) Local agency deposits.

32 (b) Local agencies may help banks locate suitable commercial
33 space for branches and may provide real estate assistance.

34 (c) Local tax incentives. Banks may be eligible for additional
35 incentives if a banking development district overlaps with an
36 enterprise zone.

37 (d) Workforce development. Customized training may be
38 developed for tellers, back-office or administrative staff,
39 information technology, security, and other select job categories.

1 40008. The Treasurer and the Department of Financial
2 Institutions shall adopt rules and regulations for the establishment
3 and maintenance of banking development districts, as provided
4 for in this division.

5 40009. The Treasurer and the Department of Financial
6 Institutions shall collaborate to create a performance review process
7 to ensure that banks taking part in the Banking Development
8 District Program are meeting their goals and initiatives and that
9 their services are having a recognizable impact on underserved
10 communities.

11 40010. Banks have an affirmative obligation to serve the
12 convenience and needs of the communities where they provide
13 services commensurate with the federal Community Reinvestment
14 Act.

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